



Southgate School

Attendance Policy

2017

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2017

CONTENTS

1. Introduction and Statement of Intent
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Understanding Types of Absence
4. Absence Procedures
5. Lateness
6. Holidays in Term Time
7. Attendance and Pupil Support Service
8. Summary
9. Appendices

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 Southgate School regards regular attendance as very important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and that regular attendance at the school is necessary to promote better life chances. Most of our young people benefit from strong, established routines and are unsettled by disruption to those routines. This can have a significant impact on levels of anxiety and their ability to learn. For this reason there is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. The school's ethos encourages children to feel that their presence is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

1.2 Our approach is therefore very child-centred. We also recognise that we have pupils who need some recognition of their needs in terms of their patterns of attendance: some come to us following a long period of disengagement from schooling and need their resilience to be built up carefully over time with a part-time timetable; some suffer significant health issues and problems with very poor stamina and need their timetable adjusted accordingly; some are hypersensitive and cannot easily access either school or family trips unless provision is made for this to happen at quieter times. Each of these cases is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. There is no automatic right to holidays in term time, to part-time timetables or regular absence. These must be agreed between school and home for very good reasons.

1.3 There is a legal requirement for schools to set targets for improving school attendance. There is now more Government pressure on schools than ever before to ensure the regular attendance of children in their school. It is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time. If the child is regularly absent from school without good reason this can result in prosecution of the parents/carers in the Magistrates Court

This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, to raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on attendance, the school will:

- Do a first day follow-up on any pupil absence, ringing home if parents/carers have not sent a message or if the reasons given seem questionable, and we follow up with a visit to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the family if we are concerned. We can also request the police to do a 'safe and well visit'.
- Report on attendance levels to Governors in the written Headteacher's Report
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and punctuality through Parents' Evenings, Annual Reviews and additional letters if we are concerned.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously with the support of the APSO.
- Celebrate good attendance by sending a text to parents of pupils whose attendance has improved following the regular review with the school's APSO and letters of congratulation

2.0 UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

2.1 Every half day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Absences for religious observance will also be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences for day trips/holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

2.2 PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year without very good cause. Very good cause could include a hospitalisation followed by a long period of convalescence; school refusal caused by high levels of anxiety; high levels of violent behaviour which are making the pupil and his peers at school unsafe. We will always see this as an interim arrangement where school and home work to resolve the issue over time, including adjusting the provision in school as necessary.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, with monthly meetings between our Pupil Support Officer and the school's designated APSO. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absenteeism mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed. Persistent absenteeism pupils are closely tracked and monitored. The parents of pupils whose persistent absence is causing concern are subject to an Action Plan and which may offer support and will set clear targets and expectations. All persistent absenteeism pupils are automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service.

Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we ask for parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

4.0

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

4.1 If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence

Via

- Email

- Telephone

- Parents/carers can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with them.

4.2 If a child is absent school will:

- Contact parents/carers by the most viable option on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them, and we follow up with a visit to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the family if we are concerned. We can also request the police to do a 'safe and well visit'.
- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with the Pupil Support Officer, the Family Support Officer or a member of SMT if a child is persistently absent.
- Inform the Attendance and Pupil Support Service if attendance falls below 90%

5.0 TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including Absence, so we need to have up to date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

6.0 LATENESS

Poor punctuality also disrupts routines. If a child misses the start of the day they not only miss work but also miss out on vital information and news for the day. Pupils that arrive late can also disrupt lessons and disrupt the learning of others.

Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by the end of registration.

All children arriving after registration period will receive an unauthorised absence mark. We do however keep registration open in the morning because of the difficulties some parents occasionally face through no fault of their own (distance, transport difficulties/breakdown, pupils' anxieties and difficulties in the morning)

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers may be asked to meet with the Attendance Panel and/or the Head Teacher to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

However, the school as always wishes to maintain a child-centred approach and recognises that sometimes it is in the interests of the child to arrive late or leave early e.g. for safeguarding reasons. Again this must be agreed on a case-by-case basis with home.

7.0 HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Previous legislation allowed Head Teachers to grant a leave of absence of up to ten days per year

during term time for the purpose of a family holiday in “special circumstances”. The legislation has now been changed and so absences cannot be granted apart from “exceptional” circumstances - and family holidays are not classed as “exceptional” circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances Leave Request form must be completed if Parents/Carers need to take their child out of school. The Head Teacher will then consider whether leave will or will not be authorised.

Penalty Notices may be issued in the following circumstances:

- Parents have not sought permission from the Head Teacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time
- If the Head Teacher has refused but the absence occurs anyway
- If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation

And

- Where the individual absence has been recorded by the school as an unauthorized holiday in the attendance register on at least 10 sessions (5 school days)

The new amendments also reduce the timescale for fixed penalty notices. Fixed penalty notices are, in effect, charges for absence that has not been approved and, from September, will include family holidays. The penalty charge is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within £28 days. These charges apply whether the absence is one day or 10 days. Previous regulation allowed 42 days for payment. Penalty Notices may be issued to each parent of the child.

Where parents continue to take unauthorized holidays in term time, despite having previously been issued with a Penalty Notice, the Local Authority will consider a prosecution under S444 of the Education Act 1996.

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child’s education.

The Department of Education amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 with effect from 1/9/2013.

7

The Head Teacher is not allowed to grant any leave of absence, including term time holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's learning as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child's education. Additionally there is a possibility that their child's place at

Southgate could be at risk.

The Local Authority has the powers to issue Penalty Notices which can amount to £120.00

8.0 ATTENDANCE AND PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICE

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems. This will usually resolve the attendance problem, but if difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service. Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Attendance and Pupil Support Service themselves to ask for help or advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The Attendance and Pupil Support Service will try to work with the parents/carers and school to resolve the attendance problems, but if this is unsuccessful the Service may use legal action, such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the legal options are available from the school or the Local Authority.

9.0 SUMMARY

All staff at the school are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and families to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure that their children attend school regularly.

The school has a duty to identify pupils who are not attending regularly and, with the support of the Local Authority, take necessary action.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

Please see Appendices for letters and Leave of Absence forms.